



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

HIGH-RANKING MS-13 GANG MEMBER ARRESTED BY ICE IN BOSTON

BOSTON—Officers assigned to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE’s) fugitive operations division arrested a member of the violent “Mara Salvatrucha” (MS-13) gang here yesterday.

Herberth Escobar-Leiva, a 29-year-old citizen of El Salvador who goes by the street name “Perro,” was ordered removed by a federal immigration judge on Sept. 19, 2002. He failed to depart the U.S. as required by law and ICE subsequently issued a warrant of removal.

Escobar-Leiva has been identified by police as a high-ranking member of the MS-13. He has an extensive criminal history of over 20 arraignments including being charged with breaking and entering daytime with intent to commit a felony with a machine gun, and has several convictions for crimes that include larceny and malicious destruction of property. He is also wanted on five outstanding state warrants.

“The removal of criminal fugitive aliens is a high priority for ICE,” said Bruce E. Chadbourne, field office director for detention and removal in New England. “This is an especially critical mission when dealing with members of violent street gangs who have already been ordered to leave this country. ICE will continue to aggressively seek out dangerous criminals attempting to hide out in our communities.”

Escobar-Leiva is currently in ICE custody awaiting his removal from the country.

The arrest of Escobar-Leiva is the latest in Massachusetts under Operation Community Shield, a nationwide ICE anti-gang initiative intended to disrupt, dismantle, and assist in the criminal prosecution of violent gangs by employing the full range of authorities available to ICE.

Recently, ICE officers and special agents in Massachusetts arrested 63 street gang members during a two-week long nationwide operation in August.

ICE uses its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities in targeting gang-related narcotics smuggling, money laundering, and in seeking the forfeiture of illegally derived assets.

Operation Community Shield involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. ICE uses intelligence on gang organizations and leadership provided by state and local authorities. This information is then used whenever possible to arrest, prosecute, and/or deport individual gang members.

The initial target of Operation Community Shield was MS-13, which is one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the country. In February, ICE kicked off the initiative with agents in six major U.S. cities conducting a coordinated enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of 103 members of MS-13. In the months that followed, ICE agents throughout the country joined ranks and continued targeting MS-13 members in their jurisdictions.

In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members. With the launch of the second phase, ICE's Operation Community Shield aims to ensure that gang members have no safe haven in our nation's communities.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.